

The 153 Fishes

Jan Beute - <https://www.vlichthus.nl/>

John 21:1-14

1 After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he himself.

2 There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.

3 Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.

4 But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.

5 Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No.

6 And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

7 Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea.

8 And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes.

9 As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.

10 Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.

11 Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.

12 Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.

13 Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise.

14 This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.

The Lord Revealed Himself

The passage ends almost exactly as it began: "After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples" and "This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead." Although the Lord Jesus had risen from the dead, He did not simply rejoin His disciples as He had done before. "Before" means prior to His suffering, death and resurrection, when the disciples and the Lord Jesus always moved together. After His resurrection He did not join them to carry on exactly where He had left off. He was scarcely with them, except on certain occasions. What is striking is that the Lord revealed Himself only when He considered it necessary. The text does not say "the Lord came to them," but "the Lord revealed Himself to them." The word

“reveal” literally means to unveil or to draw aside a veil. It was as though the Lord was always with His disciples, yet behind a veil, or behind a curtain, or behind the scenes. They did not see Him. On certain occasions the veil was drawn back and He revealed Himself. Suddenly the Lord stood on the shore, in the upper room, or wherever it might be. There is nothing unusual about this; it has remained so ever since. The Lord is always with us, yet we do not see Him. Did not the Lord Himself say so? These are almost the last words of Matthew’s Gospel, where He tells His disciples: “and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” That means the Lord will remain with His disciples and, in general, with believers. It is a word of comfort, even in our own day. For although, strictly speaking, the age of which the Lord spoke has on the one hand already ended, on the other hand we still live in this present age. Titus 2:12 tells us that this is still the case — “this present world,” an evil age, moreover. As long as this age continues, the Lord is certainly with us. If it were the age to come, it would no longer be necessary to say that the Lord is with us, for that is the very hallmark of the age to come. Evidently the Lord was always with His disciples, yet He did not reveal Himself. A characteristic of the risen Christ is that He did not show Himself openly, but remained hidden from His own (that is, from His disciples). At first the term “disciple” was used for all believers, all followers of the Lord. That is the situation we still know today. Nothing has changed in that respect. What has changed is that we have been taught how things stand. What remains is that the Lord, as a rule, hides Himself. When we look more closely, it is a very long time indeed since the Lord revealed Himself to believers in this visible way — some nineteen centuries ago. In those days it was already unusual for the Lord to reveal Himself to His disciples. That was the situation in the days John is describing here, and also in the days of the Acts of the Apostles. At first there were quite a number of exceptions. Those exceptions became rarer and rarer, until finally there were none at all. The normal situation — which set in many centuries ago — is that the Lord hides Himself. He has risen, He is alive, He is with us — that is His promise — yet He does not show Himself. The last time anyone saw the Lord was in heaven. The last account we read of someone seeing the Lord is in the history of Stephen. He saw heaven opened and the Lord standing on the right hand of God. Two chapters further on in Acts we read that the Lord made Himself known to Paul, but it is questionable what Paul actually saw of the Lord. The Lord said, “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.” It was He, certainly, but whether He showed Himself visibly is open to doubt. Even if the Lord had wished to show Himself, it became difficult because Paul was blinded at that moment, so that he could hardly have seen much. We do not know exactly when James was converted, though he too saw the Lord. It is reasonable to suppose that the Lord revealed Himself to James — the eldest natural son of Joseph and Mary — before His ascension. What we do know is that the Lord kept Himself hidden. He was hidden to such an extent that in many situations people saw Him yet did not recognise Him — even people who had known Him.

That is what happens here in John 21. It becomes clear that the disciples recognised the Lord only by the way He acted — most probably by the way He spoke, in keeping with the character of John's Gospel. They recognised Him by the word. After all, He is the Word. They did not even recognise Him by His outward appearance. The text states this several times. John says to Peter in verse 7: "It is the Lord." John recognised Him. It is well known that John — of whom we repeatedly read that he was the disciple whom Jesus loved — had a more intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus than any of the other apostles. We may therefore assume that John did not recognise the Lord by His outward appearance, but rather by the inner nature of the Lord Jesus, which he perceived or recognised. In verse 12 Jesus says to them, "Come and dine." Then we read: "And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou?" Why would they ask Him that? Because they did not recognise Him by His appearance! Why was that? Probably because He looked different. They did not dare ask Him, even though (as the text adds) they knew it was He. How did they know? By the way He spoke, and possibly also by His voice. By "voice" we should not immediately think of pitch or accent, but simply of the manner of speaking itself. The same thing happened with Mary. She thought she was speaking to the gardener. When the gardener said to her, "Mary," she suddenly knew who He was. Yet He was still the "Gardener" — the One who cultivates the land, who builds and keeps a garden. The Son of man. You know what He must do: build and keep the garden, the paradise. In any case, she did not recognise the Lord by His outward appearance, but by the way He behaved and by the way He spoke. Speaking is not done with the voice alone. It is done with one's whole being, with one's whole body. The Lord did the same. If a photograph had been taken of the Lord, we would not have recognised Him. In a photograph all movement and sound are absent; everything is frozen. Then the question would arise: who exactly is this? What we find in this account is that the Lord revealed Himself. That is stated in the first and the last verse of this section. Between those verses we read emphatically that the disciples did not recognise Him at first. Later they knew who it was. Outwardly He could not be recognised. This history teaches us about the dispensation in which we live.

Someone once told me that his employer used this passage to urge people to have more self-confidence. The disciples, he said, had to do something in full confidence that they would never normally have done: fish during the day (fishing is usually done at night) and cast the net on the wrong side of the boat. That would put things right. The man then added that his employer was completely mistaken and had misused the Bible. "For in this story it is not a question of self-confidence, but of obedience," he said. You can, like that employer, read into the Bible whatever you like, but that is obviously not the intention.

What we learn here is what would follow after the resurrection of Christ — what would happen to believers after the Lord Jesus had been raised. The Lord hides Himself. He is with us, yet behind that veil. He belongs to the unseen world, yet He also belongs to the world around us and within us. For the Lord is there too. That is the other side of the veil. He is here, yet

He is also in that spiritual world of which He is part — the heaven of heavens. When we look more closely, that is not so far away. The Lord is in heaven, yet at the same time we read that the Lord is in us and dwells in the believer. In that way the Lord is in our midst. Why? Because heaven itself extends to the very place where we are. Conversely, it can also be said that the believer is in heaven. That is why the Bible does not speak of a believer going to heaven. As far as location is concerned, he is already there. The reason he cannot see it is the limitation of his body — the fact that he dwells in this earthly tent. The Bible also regards this as a prison — a place of exile — from which he will one day be delivered. Not in order to go somewhere else (for he was already there), but at most to leave here. However that may be, the Lord hides Himself. He is with us, beside us, in us; we are in Him; yet we do not see Him. That is what the Lord demonstrates here.

The Lord shows us still more. For here we are told how the Lord makes Himself known — how, and to what extent, He reveals Himself to the believer. It says:

John 21:1

1 After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he himself.

It does not say “they knew from then on in this way,” but “on this wise shewed he himself.” This is not teaching something about the disciples; it is teaching something about the Lord Jesus — how, and to what extent, He reveals Himself. He reveals Himself in such a way that the disciples recognise Him, and at the same time in such a way that those who do not know Him and are not His disciples would certainly not have recognised Him. Even the disciples found it difficult. They knew the inner nature of the Lord Jesus, His voice and His manner of acting. Outwardly — as in a photograph on a wanted poster — they would not have recognised Him. He revealed Himself, and here we can read how the Lord also reveals Himself in our own day. This is portrayed in a typical way. This manner of teaching is characteristic of all four evangelists. The events all speak in one way or another about the Lord Jesus. They have a prophetic, typical, symbolic or spiritual meaning. Instead of wanting to learn from it only that we must obey the Lord (as though we did not already know that), we would do well to immerse ourselves in this history also in order to learn who the Lord is, what He does and how He behaves — how the Lord here portrays spiritual realities so that we may draw instruction from them. That is the purpose of this account.

John 21:2

2 There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.

Five and Two

Exactly five disciples are named — the sons of Zebedee are John and James — together with two unnamed ones. Five and two. This reminds us of the five loaves and the two fishes! Together they make seven. Here we have seven disciples, divided into five and two. Why should we think of

the five loaves and two small fishes? First, because of the number. Second, because, on closer inspection, this history is about bread and fish! It is stated plainly.

John 21:13

13 Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise.

If I were to ask you how many loaves and fishes are involved here, you might well answer five loaves and two fishes. In John 6 we have the account of the feeding of the five thousand, who were fed with five loaves and two fishes. Here the disciples — five named and two unnamed — are fed with bread and fish. There is already a clear connection. The number five stands for “grace.” Five is also the dispensation in which we live — the dispensation of grace. “Of which ye have heard,” says Paul. (The translation continues in the same clear, emphatic and spiritually instructive style for the remainder of the provided text, maintaining the original’s theological depth and natural flow. Let me know if you would like the next section rendered as well.)

Ephesians 3:2

2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward.

The characteristic of those five, then, is grace, and the characteristic of the dispensation of grace is the hidden Christ. In Ephesians 3 this dispensation is first called “the dispensation of the grace of God,” but later in the same chapter it is called “the dispensation of the mystery.” Why? Because grace reigns, and it reigns because the Judge — or rather the King (and it is the same Person) — hides Himself. When He hides Himself and does not execute judgment, when He pronounces no sentence and carries none out, it means that grace is reigning. Or, to put it in the language of the Epistle to the Hebrews, “the Lord is not here; the Lord is above, seated at the right hand of God.” He sits there on the throne of grace. Be thankful that the Lord does not intervene and does not show Himself, for if He were to do so, if He were to appear and speak to the world, He would speak in wrath and anger. He will then come to judge the nations — and mankind in general. And yet so many Christians ask the Lord to come quickly. Thank Him rather that He does not. As Peter says:

2 Peter 3:9, 15

9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

15 And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you.

Peter adds that Paul teaches the same thing and writes about it in his epistles. We meet that truth here. The truth of the five is that God hides Himself. After four dispensations comes the fifth, and it is of an entirely different character (just as the four fingers stand opposite the thumb). Four stands for visible things, for the things that have been revealed, for the material world. Then comes something entirely different: the fifth dispensation, which does not belong to those first four but stands over

against them. It is the dispensation in which it is not a question of revealed things but of hidden things. It concerns the hidden Christ and therefore the Spirit of Christ. It is a spiritual matter. It is not about a revealed people of God in this world of the five, as Israel was in the fourth dispensation, but about a spiritual people that belongs to an unseen world. That is portrayed in this fifth dispensation, and that is the meaning of the five loaves in John 6. The question is: who first brought bread? Who in the Bible was the first to come bringing bread? It was Melchizedek! He came and brought bread and wine. Melchizedek is a picture of the priesthood of Christ in the present dispensation — Christ who brings forth bread and wine, who is Himself the Bread of life. The five loaves in John 6 are also linked with the manna that came down from heaven. The Lord Himself says, “I am that bread.” In so doing He also says, “I am those five loaves,” or “I am the fifth Bread.” For He is the Bread of the five. He is also the fifth stone (see the history of David). It was only a small stone. Later it filled the whole earth (read Daniel 2). Christ is the Fifth. He is the One who, from the unseen world (for that is what the five means), intervenes in the course of events in this visible world (see the thumb opposite the other four fingers). We see that same Lord here in John 21. According to the order of the visible world one should fish at night on the left side of the boat. Then the Lord came from an entirely different direction (as a true Hebrew, by the way) and said, “No, it must be during the day and on the right side.” An intervention from the unseen world into the course of events on earth — and it proves fruitful. Five stands for that which comes from the unseen world and exerts its influence and effect upon the visible world. The working of God’s Spirit in the believer is nothing other than the working of that five. You do not see it, yet it is there. Abraham was first called Abram. His name was changed and he received a five in it. That is the letter “h,” which has the numerical value of five. When Abraham lived in fellowship with his Lord in heaven, that name was completed. Another five had to be added. It is the same with us. When we live in fellowship with the Lord, that five becomes active. Then the hidden Christ becomes active in our lives. Then the Bread of life enters us and has its effect there. Five loaves — on closer inspection you can feed five thousand people with them. Whether it is five, fifty, five hundred or five thousand does not make much difference. Five stands for spiritual things. Five disciples are named, two are not. They are also disciples, but without a name. Why? Because they are a picture of the Church, which is by nature hidden. A Church that has no name in the world. The Church does not belong here. In former times you often had to fill in which church you belonged to when asked about your faith or religion. As the Church we have no name here. We are the unknown here. We live in the world, but we do not form part of it. We should not really be entered in the population register. A believer is registered in heaven, in that heavenly Jerusalem according to Hebrews 12. We have come to that assembly in heaven. The Church is registered there and has received its citizenship there.

Philippians 3:20a

20a For our conversation is in heaven;

...Not here, but there. That is why the two unnamed disciples are a picture of the Church here. They are two, they belong together, and we already find that on the first page of John's Gospel. There too there are two disciples, one of whom has no name, yet together they are a picture of the Church. We know afterwards who they are — John and Andrew — but at first they have no name. Together they portray the unity of the Church. There are countless examples of two who become one and together form a picture of the Church to which we belong. Another example is the two men with only one name, Cleopas (which means something like "the glory of the Father," an exact description of the calling of the Church). Those two men are a picture of the Church, and exactly the same thing happens there. The Lord reveals Himself to them, but they do not recognise Him. They had walked with Him for months, probably years, and yet He walked beside them and they did not know Him.

Luke 24:16

16 But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. Nevertheless, they did not know Him! "When he took the bread, he brake it and gave it to them." Then they suddenly knew who He was. He had explained to them from the Law that bread is a type of Christ and that the Passover lamb is a type of the Messiah. What could have been more fitting than to explain to them the very things that were then taking place (it was Passover, the feast of unleavened bread) — that it was a picture of the death and resurrection of the Messiah. When He took the bread, it dawned on them what that bread meant. That is why it says "that he was known of them in breaking of bread." It does not say that He was known to them by the scars on His hands. These travellers to Emmaus say "that he was known of them in breaking of bread." They are the type of the Church that knows the Lord. They did not recognise Him by sight, but from the type behind which the Lord hides Himself. We still have that same type of the bread today on the so-called "Lord's Supper table." There too we see the Lord who hides Himself in those signs. Or the other way round: in so far as He reveals Himself, He reveals Himself in those tokens.

The disciples who came to the tomb saw two men in white clothing! That was the result of the resurrection of Christ. It was not Christ Himself. Nor are they a type of the Lord; they are a type of the Church. They are a type of those who are faithful to the Lord, who are clothed with the righteousness of Christ, with white garments, and who find themselves in the tomb. Just as we have died and been buried with the Lord and are, in a certain sense, still dead to the world. Paul says:

Galatians 6:14b

14b ...the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. We are still typologically in that tomb. We are shut out from the world. We belong to those who have chosen the Son of David. We form part of that company that is outside Jerusalem, outside the camp, in the rock, in the tomb, bound to Him there, waiting for the moment when this Son of David will at last be King in Jerusalem. Those two men in white clothing appear again later. The last place where the Lord set His feet on the earth is the same place where He will first set His feet again in the future. That is the

Mount of Olives, from where He ascended. The two men in white clothing who remained there are a picture of the Church.

So it continues to the end of the Acts of the Apostles. There we find Paul on a ship whose sign is Castor and Pollux — the constellation of the Twins — again a picture of the Church. The Church is a people gathered out of two: Jews and Gentiles. That is stated in Ephesians.

Ephesians 2:14

14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

Ephesians 3:6

6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

Those two — Jew and Gentile — who were so emphatically separated from each other by the law, have been made one because God has abolished the middle wall — that is, the law. He nailed it to the cross. When Jew and Gentile come to Christ, they become one in Christ. Everywhere, therefore, where two men or two things appear as a unity while belonging together, they are a picture of the Church. Another example is the following. In those same days of the resurrection of Christ the offering of the firstfruits sheaf was brought. That is the first fruit of the harvest and a picture of the resurrection of Christ. When harvest time came, the firstfruits of the harvest — ears of corn — had to be gathered, processed and made into bread. Two loaves, yet those two firstfruits loaves together formed one offering. The priest took those two loaves in his hands and then had to move with the loaves before the face of the Lord. What is portrayed here — by the priest's movement — is that he lives. It is obviously a picture of Christ, who has risen from the dead and has become High Priest "after the power of an endless life" (Hebrews 7:16). And what is in His hands? The Church, of course. Two loaves as a picture of the Church. Living because the Church is in the hands of the Lord. They are therefore, like all the unnamed ones, a picture of the Church.

Land and Sea, Light and Darkness

John 21:3

3 Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.

Simon says he is going fishing. Fishing was his trade, and it had already been said to him that they would become "fishers of men." So when you no longer know what to do, you can always fall back on your old occupation. Peter did so, and the others said, "We also go with thee." So they went fishing together and immediately entered the ship. The words "They went into the ship" also appear in Matthew 13. There a great multitude had gathered, and the Lord went into the ship and put out from the shore. From the ship, floating on the water, He spoke to the multitude on the shore, the dry land, about the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Why? Because in the dispensation of the mystery salvation is no longer in Israel but has been sent to the Gentiles. The land here is a picture of Israel and the sea a picture of the nations. The Lord speaks from the ship to the

multitude on the shore. In this way it is portrayed that a time would come when the message would be brought from the Church (the ship on the waters is a picture of the Church) to Israel. That is the reversed order. It is not how it should be, yet that is what would happen. Just as fishing by day on the right side is not how it should be, yet that is what would happen. There are many more ships in the Bible, all with the same meaning.

John 21:4

4 But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: We should really read: "When the morning was now come, Jesus stood on..." Here, albeit figuratively, it concerns the resurrection of Christ. For here the risen Christ appears in the morning light! The rising of the sun is itself a picture of the resurrection of Christ. In the morning Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. They had fished all night and caught nothing. That was because it was night. You may say that one ought to fish at night. Yes, but here other matters are in view — namely what would happen after the resurrection of Christ. Night would come over the world (the world is still in that night). This is stated countless times in the preceding chapters of this Gospel. In John 3 it is first called night, when Nicodemus comes to the Lord. I still find that remarkably wise, for when it is night one wants to go to a place where there is light. So one goes to the Lord. If only because Scripture says that "the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light," and that Light would be the Messiah. A few chapters further on Nicodemus is mentioned again. It is then expressly added that he came to Jesus by night. At the moment this is said he had meanwhile come to faith. When you are in the night, the best thing you can do is go to the Lord. The world is in the night and men ought to come to the Lord. Applied to Israel (he was the teacher of Israel): they lived under the law. Now the law is in any case a shadow, and shadow is darkness. Where there is shadow the light does not penetrate. The law may be a shadow of "good things to come," yet it is truly night. That people under the law, living therefore in that darkness, had to come to the Light that would arise upon them. When the Light came, they ran away as fast as they could. For it says in John 3:

John 3:18

18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already,

...What does this "is condemned already" mean? Does not man only later stand before the throne of God? On the last day, surely? The explanation follows:

John 3:19

19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

When men were allowed to choose between light and darkness, they chose darkness. The judgment that now rests upon the unbelieving man and upon the whole creation in general is that darkness reigns and that the Light which was in the world has withdrawn from that world. The Lord said the same thing in this same Gospel of John: "Walk while ye have the light" or "Come to the light while the light is with you." For the Light would

go away again and leave the world in darkness. With this understanding, however, that we — if we turn to the Lord — also walk in the light in a spiritual sense. Even if, so to speak, all lighting fails here, we are still in the light of Christ and the light of His Word. We then experience joy and have fellowship one with another, says 1 John 1. It is also stated that if we walk in the light, He cleanses us from all sin.

The judgment under which the world — the unbelieving man — lives is to live in the darkness one has chosen for oneself. That is not the judgment of the last day. Then one is cast into “outer” darkness, and that is further away. Christians who criticise the world and say, “They — the unbelievers — do everything wrong. They make the wrong laws, they have the wrong rules of life,” are missing the point. The world does not need other laws or other rules of life. It needs “the Light”! You can pray for the Netherlands, but what the Netherlands needs is not a better government; it needs the Light. As long as that is not there, nothing will happen. Men live “under the wrath of God,” says Romans 1:18, or “under the judgment,” says John 3. In that night, in that dark world, no fruit whatever is to be found of the work of Christ. What does light do in darkness? Nothing! Where light comes there is no longer darkness. What fish do the disciples catch in the night? None. Of course not, for the world is in darkness and there is no life there. There is not a single fish in that whole sea. The world now bears no fruit. Fruit comes only when the light appears in the world and the world loves the light rather than the darkness. The characteristic of our dispensation is that the world is in darkness and that the Light has withdrawn from this world. He has given the world over to uncleanness, to sin. Everywhere light disappears, darkness remains behind.

Of the believer it is said in 1 Thessalonians 5:4-5, “Ye are not in darkness... Ye are all the children of light.” We are of the day, children of the light. For when we come into that light and choose for the Lord, who is “the light of the world,” it will become evident that fruit is indeed borne. Suppose now that we see ourselves as these disciples, as fishers of men, the Church. Then we go fishing; we engage in evangelism. Where do we do that — in the world or in heaven? What do we have in mind when we cast the net? Do we think of the conversion of the world? Or do we think of adding people to the Church? If our goal is the conversion of the world so that the work of Christ would bear fruit in the world, then it is utterly pointless. It is night and the net is hanging on the left side; then you catch nothing. Only then can one possibly say that we must do what the Lord has said — albeit figuratively — namely fish by day. In the light of Christ and the light of the Word of God. Then you immediately know that the net hangs on the right side. Everything God does in our dispensation is connected with God’s right hand. That is the same as “His right side.” God’s right hand does powerful deeds. The left hand does not. Do you know with which hand the Lord created the heaven? It is stated in the Bible. With His right hand. The other hand is not even mentioned, but it must have been the left hand with which He made the earth. Now you immediately know why everything is wrong with it. It is the right hand that He stretches out from heaven to the earth. That is the working of that five. With His right hand He lays hold of the believer, leads the believer and

comes to our help. Put another way, it is the Lord who sits at the right hand of God. He, our High Priest, Advocate, Intercessor, Counsellor, sits at the right hand of God.

When the Word of God comes to the sinner it may result in that sinner accepting Christ. That, however, does not lead to the conversion of the world; on the contrary. Accepting Christ leads to being added to “the Church which is being saved,” the Church that is written in heaven. We are drawn — by God’s right hand, of course — “out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9). That does not mean that where we were it was dark and suddenly became light. No, we are taken out of this dark present evil age and transferred to an age to come in which Christ reigns.

Colossians 1:13

13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son;

Both ages remain exactly as they were. The one remains dark, the other light. The one is here on earth in the visible world, at least until now; the other is a heavenly kingdom, a hidden kingdom. Only there is light and fruit is borne. What has two thousand years of Christendom brought the world? Hopefully nothing. By that question is meant that Christendom has not improved the world. That is correct, for that was never the intention. The church or the Church does not improve the world. It is not a question of converting or improving the world. It is a question of adding to those who have already received a heavenly citizenship: the Church.

If God had wanted the world to be converted, He could have done so in this dispensation, but He does not do it now. In the next dispensation He will. In the next dispensation the kingdom of God, the kingdom of the Messiah, will be established with power also on earth. The kingdom can come on earth either because all men come to faith or because all men who refuse to come to faith are removed from the earth. The prophecies state that whoever will not come to faith will disappear from the earth. It did not happen in this dispensation because God first wanted to take His firstborn — the Church — out of this world.

The Calling of the Church

The first believers, the first ones who placed their trust in the Lord Jesus — the Messiah — are destined for a heavenly future, a heavenly inheritance. That is what God is occupied with; that is what Christ is occupied with: the gathering of a people for His Name. That people is not fished together in the night and with the net on the left side of the boat. On the contrary, it happens in broad daylight on the right side of the boat. No one fishes then, because it is considered impossible. The whole calling of the Church is the result of things that according to the world cannot be done, yet are possible with God. It is a great wonder and the hallmark of our dispensation, in which the Lord from His hidden place performs these wonders. That is portrayed here. All night they caught nothing, and when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore and the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Fishing at night with the net on the left side was not the intention, for then you do not know the Lord (I mean every word figuratively). For if you preach a gospel with an earthly expectation,

a message for the improvement of men, of sinners and of the world, then you achieve nothing. And far more important: then you do not know the Lord.

The Lord later asks: Have ye any meat? In the Bible “meat” is not something that comes after the meal, but something that should accompany the bread. Bread throughout the Bible is a picture of the life that Christ brings about and that is received by believers. A life with respect to the kingdom that is to come here on earth and with respect to the new earth. Here it is not a question of things connected with this earth, namely bread (life) only. Something extra is asked for. The whole calling of the Church, of you and me, is something extra. Something that was certainly not revealed in the Old Testament. What is described in the Old Testament is the creation and the fall of man whereby he became mortal. What is announced is the coming of the Messiah, who would give man life again so that he might yet live on the earth, even on a new earth, under authority and in the kingdom of the last Adam. Not a word is said about the calling of a Church of firstborn ones that is written in heaven. The whole calling of the Church out of the earth, with not only restoration of life but even life on a much higher level — a life with respect to heaven itself — is utterly extra.

We are accustomed to the idea and do not find it extra because we have now lived in this dispensation for more than two thousand years. For some it is new that believers will one day live here below on a new earth. They thought they would go to heaven, but not all believers go to heaven. Only the firstfruits — those who came to faith from the resurrection of Christ until the rapture of the Church — go to heaven. We as the Church are exceptional! We are a people that is actually no people at all. We are the result of a work that God does and that He had not announced. It says in the Old Testament: “the Lord shall do a work that, if it were told you, ye would not believe.”

Habakkuk 1:5

5 Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you.

That was said to Israel. What work? What would they not believe? The calling of a people for the Name of the Lord out of the Gentiles, apart from Israel. They would not believe it, and they do not believe it even now. A people that is no people — that must have been quite a puzzle for them. It is quoted in Romans 10:19: “I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people.” And in Isaiah 28:11, “For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.” In 1 Corinthians 14:21 it is explained that this refers to the Church. You do not read that in the Old Testament itself. It concerns a work that God does on top of the “normal” work of reconciliation, namely the restoration of a fallen world. God does something extra!

John 21:5-6

5 Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No.

6 And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship,

and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

From John 21:5 it is clear that fishing at night on the left side of the boat yields no meat (again figuratively). In John 21:6 it is striking that it says, "Ye shall find." It does not say, "Ye shall catch." Apparently they had to seek. There were hidden things they would find, but only with the net on the right side — the good side. Look at the right side and you will see that God is gathering a Church for His Name out of the nations. "To the praise of the glory of his grace," says the Epistle to the Ephesians. It is not a question of what two thousand years of Christendom have brought the world. It is a question of what Christ has brought. It is not about a people for the world, but about a people for His Name. "They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes." The disciples lost control of the boat and the fish; they could no longer draw it. Here too no human work is portrayed. Nor is it so much the result of their labour. They only had to cast the net. That the net became full is the result of what God gives.

John 21:7a

7a Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord!

First we read that they cast the net by day on the right side (the good side), and that the net then became completely full. Yet before it says that the net was full of great fishes (verse 11), we first read: "Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord." Here we read that after casting the net on the right side they have a wonderful catch. They then see the result of the Lord's work and thereby they know the Lord! Suddenly they know at once who He is: "It is the Lord." By what do they now know Him? By His work, His power, His word! He said, "Cast the net on the right side." He is that Word and that Light from John's Gospel. Both together produce this result and suddenly there is recognition. If you fish on the right side, you will find the Lord and much more besides: namely fruit.

John 21:7b

7b Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea.

Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord. When he is called Simon and not only Peter, then he hears. Simon means "hearing," that is, believingly accepting what he hears. We also read about girding on a garment in John 13. Here it is not about Peter, but about the Lord.

Death and Resurrection

John 13:3-5

3 Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God,

4 He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.

5 After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was

girded. In these passages we read about laying aside and girding on a garment. That is a picture of death, resurrection and new birth. Peter was naked and he girded himself, that is, he put his garment on. Here it concerns the risen, born-again Christ who stands on the shore. The One they knew or recognised, with the result that they themselves were also born again.

John 21:8

8 And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes.

In this way Peter, the ship, the net and the fishes — in short, the whole gathering — come to the Lord. They cover a distance of “about two hundred cubits.” What does that have to do with it? Well, two disciples are a picture of the Church, and two hundred cubits are likewise a picture of the Church. Because it is a distance that is covered during a certain period of time (we have to cover that distance, after all), it indicates the duration of our dispensation. Even better: the duration in which Christ hides Himself. The time of the mystery is two. How many zeros come after it makes no difference, for a zero is nothing. It is two days! Peter said it later too, but added that you can put three zeros after it. That makes no difference. We read that in 2 Peter 3:9, though I give a rather free rendering. It says: “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward.” How long? Peter then says: “For one day is with the Lord as a thousand years” (so put three zeros after it; that makes no difference) “and a thousand years as one day.” That is two days of a thousand years each. When would the Lord reveal Himself again, when the mystery would be over? When would He reveal Himself to Israel in the future? According to Hosea 6:2, after two days and therefore at the beginning of the third day, that is, when two full days have passed! On the third day He will make Israel live again. The Lord Himself also rose after two days, at the beginning of the third day, in the morning light. Exactly the same. So we find it in this passage too, verse 14: “This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.” After two hundred cubits they reach the shore. Then the fishing is over and the net is on the shore. Those two hundred cubits are a time of two thousand years or the two days of a thousand years, being the duration of our present dispensation. Measured from the resurrection of Christ until the future conversion of Israel, when the Lord will once more set His feet on the Mount of Olives. In Acts 28 we read that Paul was two full years (thus into the third year) in his own hired house (under house arrest) in Rome and there preached the kingdom of God. That position of Paul corresponds with the present position of the Church. Set apart in a house, well cared for, but not allowed to go out. The release of Paul after two years is a picture of the deliverance of the Church and of the conversion of Israel at hand. Those two years are therefore also a picture of the two thousand years of the mystery.

We find that same picture in the two thousand cubits that the people of Israel had to keep between them and the ark. That history is in Joshua 3.

The priests had to set the ark on the bed of the Jordan, at a distance of two thousand cubits ahead of the people. Only then might the people begin to walk. The people therefore first had to cover two thousand cubits to reach the ark. They had to walk two thousand cubits to meet “the Lord as the One who was crucified and in death,” pictured in the ark of the covenant on the bed of the Jordan. Israel also had to walk two thousand cubits to see Absalom hanging on an oak tree. The meeting with Absalom is a picture of the meeting with the Lord who was crucified. The meeting with the Lord on the Mount of Olives is a meeting with the pierced Lord, the Crucified One.

In John 20 it is illustrated that, after the resurrection of Christ, Israel would first not, but later would, come to recognition of the Lord — that is, to faith.

In other words: from the Mount of Olives to the Mount of Olives again. So in verse 8 it is said that they were not far from land. Although two thousand years is a very long time in our eyes, the Lord always said: “No, it is but a little while; it will not last so long.” According to the Bible we have been living in the last days ever since the first coming of Christ. The kingdom of God has drawn near. The time may be long by our standards, but in God’s thoughts it is not.

Dragging the net full of fish to the shore is a picture of the preaching of the gospel and the gathering of the Church in our days. Drawing the net right up onto the shore (verse 11) is a picture of the rapture of the Church. And did all the fishes come onto the shore? Yes! Will all believers go in the rapture? Yes! We read that in verse 11: “and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.” They all came. Through typology we learn that the Church as a whole comes to the shore, to heaven, and moreover is counted, for they are all there — all 153. That naturally has a spiritual meaning.

John 21:9

9 As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.

Once the calling of the Church, including the rapture of the Church, has been portrayed, we receive again an illustration of the calling of the Church in our days. Not the continuation of it, but again an illustration of the same truth. Typology does not always run on continuously. It often turns out that many things are mentioned in succession which, as far as meaning is concerned, do not stand one after another but beside each other or even overlap. Both with the same and with different words. A repetition of the same truth in different types. It is important to learn that. In verse 9 it says that they had come to land. In verse 10 it says that the Lord was present there. Then the fish is prepared over the fire. It is not clear whether the bread was also roasted over that fire. In verse 12 the Lord invites them to the meal, and in verse 13 He also serves the table. He did the same in the upper room! There where He made Himself known, first to the ten and later to the eleven disciples. The upper room where He kept the Passover meal with His disciples, where He also distributed bread and wine. It is striking that the Lord instituted the “Lord’s Supper” and yet

this is not mentioned in John's Gospel. It is found in Matthew, Mark and Luke.

Later it is also mentioned in 1 Corinthians 10 and 11, but not in John. In John, however, we do find an explanation of the meaning of the "Lord's Supper." Moreover, here in chapter 21 we find that bread is given to the disciples, to the believers, by the Lord. The Lord serves the meal. The same thing happened earlier in John 6, so that it is actually discussed more fully in this Gospel. In John 6 there was mention of the five loaves and two fishes. Here too it is about bread and fishes and also about five and two, which relates to the disciples mentioned in verse

The Fire of Coals

The fire of coals, with that bread and those fishes, has a meaning. A burning coal is simply a stone. We also call it coal. It is a stone that is on fire. It is a type of the Son of the Father (according to the Epistle to the Hebrews). It is a type of Christ, the Stone which, according to Daniel 2:34, "was cut out without hands" and "filled the whole earth." It concerns the kingdom of the Stone, of Christ, but not in its revealed form on earth, but in its hidden, its spiritual form. That is why the burning stone speaks of the hidden kingdom of Christ in heaven. The Holy Spirit is none other than Christ, who hides Himself in our hearts and in heaven. Fire here is a type of the Spirit, of Christ, who hides Himself. The burning stone is therefore a picture of the Holy Spirit. Another angle: the stone, the burning coal, came from the altar. Fire here is not a picture of death, but precisely of the Spirit, and therefore of life. Fire causes things that enter it to rise up to God; to "a sweet savour unto the Lord." What burns rises up. For it is changed from visible, tangible things into invisible, intangible things. It is therefore a picture of resurrection and ascension.

The day of Pentecost is another example. The disciples received the Spirit and there appeared cloven tongues like as of fire. Those "burning coals" are a picture of spiritual things. Burning coals are burning stones; coals, stones that are on fire. That speaks of the hidden kingdom.

That is also portrayed in John 21 with the fire of coals on the shore. For we are speaking about our present dispensation; about that hidden kingdom of which the Church is part. We come to the shore and on that shore lies the fire of coals — that hidden kingdom — and on it lies fish and bread. Five loaves and two fishes, and that speaks of the Church, now in our days.

John 21:10

10 Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.

Those fishes are caught and brought together. Once again this is an expression of the Church, which is gathered out of the nations and counted.

John 21:12a

12a Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine.

It is midday, or "mid-day." We are children of the day and children of the light. We live in the light; we walk in the light. We are invited in the middle of the day to a meal. A meal that the Lord prepares for us, in which,

strictly speaking, He not only gives us the meal but is Himself the meal. For He is the bread, the fish, the wine. In short, He is our life. That meal of bread and fish speaks in this case of life. The Lord Jesus distributing the five loaves and two fishes to the five thousand, who were seated on a high place (I think of His right hand), is a picture of Him who gives life to those who now come to Him in that high place. He gives life to those who in our days come boldly to the throne of grace. There they obtain bread and fish, or bread and wine, from the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. We are invited not only to the Lord's Supper, but we are invited to come to the Lord, just as the disciples were, so that He might give us life. The disciples therefore come. What is striking, however, is that we read:

John 21:12b

12b And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.

They do not dare. They would actually like to ask, because they still do not recognise Him in this picture. This picture is not of the raptured Church in heaven, for there we certainly know Him. It is still a picture of the gathering of the Church now, in our days. "Being invited to the meal" is the same as "catching the fish and bringing them to the shore." Here therefore the same thing is portrayed twice, namely the calling of the Church. In it we do not know Him and do not recognise Him by His outward appearance, yet we do know who He is.

John 21:13

13 Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise.

This means that the Lord calls them to the meal. They came, probably sat down, and the Lord came to them and served them the meal. That is exactly what John 6 tells us: the people first had to sit down, and then the bread, the life, was distributed to them. If you remain standing you do not receive it, and if you keep walking about you do not receive it either. You must come, sit down and rest with the Lord. He Himself is also sitting, by the way. In that position of rest one receives life.⁶ Great Fishes

John 21:11a

11a Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three;

Simon Peter took the lead in drawing the net to land. He will not have done it alone, for it was very heavy. Already in John 21:6 it was stated that they were not able to draw the net. Peter took the initiative, and what that means is clear. He would be the first speaker on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem. The Lord had earlier said something to Peter, namely when Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16b). Whereupon the Lord said to Peter, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). Verse 19 continues: "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Peter is the one who would first bring the preaching of the risen and glorified Christ, seated at the right hand of God. That is what he did on the day of Pentecost and in

the days that followed. He was the first, but many more followed. That means that the calling of the Church does not begin in Acts 9 or 28, at the calling of Paul. The calling of the Church begins on the day of Pentecost. There the risen Christ at the right hand of God was preached, and there the gathering of the Church begins; virtually immediately after the resurrection of Christ.

The term “great fishes” means in Hebrew that they were actually not fish at all. In the biblical sense they were, but not “fish” in our present meaning of the word. The expression “great fishes” is in fact the term for whales, and there were no whales in the sea of Tiberias. Yet the Hebrew expression (even though it stands here in Greek) points to whales. We call such creatures mammals. They are animals with lungs and are not really fish. According to biblical thought they are, of course, because they live in the water or in the sea. These great fishes do live in the water, yet they actually drown in it. They belong in the water, and they cannot really do without it. That is exactly the picture of a believer who, though he lives in the sea — in the sea of the nations — yet if he stays under too long he dies. The whale must regularly come up to take in air (Spirit). It may be able to stay under for a long time, yet it lives by the grace of the air and therefore of the heaven that is above those waters. An example of such a great fish is the dolphin. The dolphin is counted among the whales. It too has lungs. What is special about the dolphin is that it has eyes but does not need them. They have a sound system (sonar) and actually live by hearing (it does not see but it hears/believes). I have seen splendid demonstrations of dolphins. The eyes of those creatures are covered and yet they flawlessly retrieve rings from the water. They find them blindly by hearing. They “walk not by sight but by hearing.” The dolphin is a very intelligent animal, as far as animals can be intelligent. One might expect the same of a believer, for if there is wisdom anywhere, it can only be with believers. It is also well known that dolphins are by nature rescuers of men in some way. There are quite a number of stories in circulation about the activities of dolphins. In one way or another they bring deliverance; they are rescuers and therefore pictures. The dolphin also stands in a constellation in the heavens. As a picture of resurrection, of new birth.⁷

The Number 153

It says there were 153 great fishes. That number means in the first place 3 squared times 17. Three has to do with the day of resurrection. 3 times 3 (3 squared) speaks of the fulfilment of the 3, namely that things take shape. For 3 stands not only for resurrection but also for things that are complete and finished. Thus, for example, 7 times 7 stands for the fulfilment of the 7, and 7 also stands for completion, but then with respect to all God’s work of redemption. When something must be said very precisely, it is said three times. The Lord does this, the Lord does that, and the Lord does the other. When it is said to Peter that he will be a shepherd, it says: “Feed my lambs, feed my sheep, and feed my sheep.” 153 is $3 \times 3 \times 17$. So the 17 receives full shape. The 17 can stand for the seventeenth day of the year, the seventeenth day of the first month, the day of the resurrection of Christ. On the tenth of the first month they took

the Passover lamb into the house and there was the "entry" into Jerusalem. A week later the Lord rose from the dead and it was therefore the seventeenth of the first month. Israel passed through the Red Sea on the seventeenth of the first month. A picture of resurrection; there the people of Israel was born. The seventeenth was also the day on which the ark of Noah rested on the mountains of Ararat. That was the seventeenth of the seventh month, but later that seventh month is set as the first month. Then the new world, as it were, takes shape. If you work it out, it turns out that the same seventeenth day was also the day on which Abraham arrived in Canaan, although it is not expressly stated. The seventeenth was also the date on which Esther appeared before the king and obtained deliverance for the Jewish people.

The 17 speaks of the day of resurrection. That is, in the light of the preceding Bible texts, the simplest explanation. 153 is therefore $3 \times 3 \times 17$, which means that here the full effect (of the 17) of the resurrection of Christ is seen! This means that through Christ's resurrection we also have risen. Yet it goes further. 17 is actually an 8 because 17 is the eighth prime number (prime numbers are hidden numbers). It is therefore an 8, but then in a hidden form. The Lord rose on the eighth, it was the seventeenth day of the month, but also an eighth day, namely the day after the Sabbath. It says expressly: the day after the Sabbath. There are seven dispensations and the eighth is the new creation. The eighth day is therefore also the day of resurrection. Eight is also the first cube, for it is $2 \times 2 \times 2$ (again a three). In one way or another you always come back to the same thing. The seventeenth is a hidden 8. This speaks of the complete effect of the resurrection of Christ in hidden form, namely the calling of the Church. You have to search for it because it is hidden. The meaning of a number is found by searching in the Bible where it occurs elsewhere. If it does not occur in the Bible, then the number must be broken down into factors. In this case that is 3 squared $\times 17$.

There is quite a lot bound up with the number 17. In one way or another it is a special number that in different ways expresses the coming about of the calling of the Church.

There is also a third way to arrive at 17, namely: 153 is the triangular number of 17. A triangular number adds $1 + 2 = 3 + 3 = 6 + 4 = 10 + 5 = 15 + 6 = 21$ and so on. Added together up to (in this case) $+ 17$, the result is 153. If you work it out, 153 also turns out to be $12 \times 12 + 3 \times 3$ ($144 + 9 = 153$). Twelve is in the Bible the number for dominion. That is why, the Bible teaches, the world will one day be ruled by the twelve tribes of Israel. The day is governed by twelve hours and the year by twelve months. Twelve therefore speaks of dominion and 12×12 of the completion of that dominion; that kingdom. When in the future the gospel of the kingdom is preached, it is done by $12 \times 12,000 = 144,000$. The number three speaks, as has been said, of taking shape, of forming. 3×3 therefore speaks of this $12 \times 12 =$ dominion that has come about. Not visibly, it is true, but certainly in heaven.

There are still a few other applications of 153. They have to do with Hebrew. As far as Greek is concerned, I mention the word ichthus (= fish). This word has a numerical value of 8 times 15. The same numerical value

is also found in the word “net.” The words “net” and “fish” both represent the numerical value 153. Some people claim that if you add up all the people whom Jesus of Nazareth blessed or healed, you arrive at 153. It seems to me difficult to check that. In the Old Testament we meet the number 153 as the numerical value of the name Bezaleel, one of the two builders of the tabernacle. In this way you again arrive at the calling of the Church, for the tabernacle is certainly, among other things, a picture of the Church. It is a question of precisely determining what the effect would be of the resurrection of Christ and the preaching of the gospel in our days, that is, casting the net on the right side.

After the Order of Melchizedek

The disciple Peter, who thought he was involved in establishing the kingdom on earth, had to learn that that was not correct. He thought, as it were, to go fishing, but cast the net on the left and subsequently taught the Galatians to live under the law (Galatians 2:11 ff.). He had to learn, however, that the net had to be on the other side. He had to learn that the preaching would not be of the revealed Christ in the world, but of Christ on a high and exalted throne, from Isaiah 6. A glorified Christ, seated at the right hand of God, in the position of our High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Christ is not King on earth, but He is in heaven. In the first place He is High Priest and “He giveth mercy in time of need,” says Hebrews 4:16. He gives life. Figuratively it is exactly the same as what Melchizedek did (Genesis 14:18–20). He brought forth “life,” for he provided the meal of bread and wine. That meal which is life and fellowship. He invited Abraham and his company to the meal. His company (those who belonged to Abraham) were blessed with believing Abraham and ate of the bread and wine of Melchizedek, the righteous king of Salem, who was also priest of the Most High God.

In the New Testament we know the Lord not as the King seated in Jerusalem, “who shall rule the nations with a rod of iron.” We know the Lord who hides Himself in heaven, yet who has opened the door. “Who hath opened a new and living way,” so that we might “with boldness enter” by that new and living way to obtain mercy. This is stated in Hebrews 10:19–20, but with the words of Genesis 14:18 we say: “to obtain bread and wine.” Or with the words of John 6 and 21: “to obtain bread and fish.” The bread and the fish come from the true Fisher, from the Lord Himself. He gives us life and invites us to sit together around the fire of coals that gives light and warmth (life). The fire of coals moreover gives Spirit, namely fire and food (also life). It is all “life and more abundantly” (John 10:10).

Fishers of Men

The last chapters of John are at the same time the introduction to what follows. Acts 2 has already been mentioned several times. On the day of Pentecost the apostles really became fishers of men. It is actually also the introduction to the book “The Acts of the Apostles.” In this way we arrive at the days in which we are drawn out of the Gentiles, gathered out of the sea of the nations, to the great meal that is prepared in heaven. Not only

in the future, but also now. For now we are invited to come boldly to Him. To receive mercy now. To be blessed now. To take the Bread of Life to ourselves now. Giving heed to His invitation is the individual responsibility of man.

Amen